

**LIBRARY BOARD OF RHODE ISLAND**  
**The regular meeting of the Library Board of Rhode Island was held**  
**May 20, 2024**  
**at William Hall Library**  
**Program Room, Lower Level**  
**1825 Broad Street, Cranston, RI 02905**

**Members Attending:** John Bucci, Aaron Coutu, Jessica David, Melody Drnach (Chair), Kenneth Findlay, Christopher La Roux, Phyllis Lynch (ex officio), Doug Norris, Leslie Page, Cheryl Space, Michelle Steever, Karisa Tashjian, Tien Tran, Kate Wodehouse

**Members Absent:** Laura Kohl, Monica Nazareth-Dzialo

**Present from the Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS):** Karen Andrews, Nicolette Baffoni, Karen Mellor

**Guests:** None

**Materials Distributed:**

- Legislative Report, May 2024

**I. WELCOME**

Ms. Drnach called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm.

**II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES** from the April 08, 2024, meeting

**Moved By: Ms. Page**

**Seconded By: Mr. Tran**

The minutes were approved with correction to Section VII, Item C, Paragraph 1, referencing Exeter Public Library repairs.

**III. REPORT OF THE VICE CHAIR**

Ms. Drnach welcomed members.

**IV. CHIEF OF LIBRARY SERVICES REPORT**

**A. OLIS Updates**

**i. State Budget**

The FY25 budget is under review by the House Finance Committee, which is also expected to consider funding of State Aid to Libraries at 25%. Level service funding is anticipated for the OLIS.

**ii. RI Library Association Annual Conference**

OLIS professional staff will attend the RI Library Association (RILA) annual conference on May 22-23. OLIS is an event sponsor. Board members are invited to attend.

### iii. Kids Reading Across RI Kick-off Event

The Kids Reading Across RI (KRARI) summer reading program kickoff event was held May 4 at the State House. The event featured Wendy Mass and Rebecca Stead, authors of the 2024 book selection *The Lost Library*. Libraries and library organizations were on hand to provide varied activities.

Governor Dan McKee and First Lady Susan McKee attended and addressed attendees. In her introductory remarks, the First Lady, a former reading teacher, stressed the importance of reading over the summer to keep reading skills sharp. First Lady McKee is also an advocate of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, which provides free books to children from birth to age 5. Prior to the event, Ms. Mellor had the opportunity to discuss a possible RI pilot of the program with the First Lady and the Governor.

### iv. Continuing Education

A four-part community-centric strategic library planning course will be available May 31 in the OLIS Library Learning Center on the Niche Academy platform. The asynchronous course was developed for OLIS by Thriving Libraries, which has previously presented similar content for the OLIS CE Program.

Professional library courses were purchased in bulk from Library Journal on topics such as customer service and de-escalation techniques and made available to the library community over the past six months; participant feedback on course content and selection has been gathered throughout and will be used to determine whether to continue this type of programming. OLIS will be planning for the Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 continuing education program over the summer.

### v. Grants

#### 1. Professional Field Experience

Professional Field Experience (PFE) internship grants were awarded to 8 URI Graduate School of Library and Information Studies (GSLIS) students. The students will work in public libraries from May-August.

#### 2. Summer Reading Program

42 public libraries have been awarded Summer Reading Program (SRP) grant funds for summer reading program activities for children, teens and adults.

#### 3. Library of RI (LORI) Grants

LORI project and mini grants are midway to completion and will conclude in August. OLIS staff will visit libraries this summer and review active projects. Selected projects will be showcased at a fall LBRI meeting.

### B. University of RI Graduate School of Library and Information Studies

Ms. Mellor attended the annual GSLIS gathering at the beginning of May. URI's Graduate School of Library and Information Studies (GSLIS) accelerated online program has grown by

20%, making it URI's fastest growing graduate school program. Because the program is completely online, non-residents pay in-state tuition. The percentage of non-resident students is higher than RI residents. OLIS is considering offering mini-scholarships to support library paraprofessionals who wish to enroll in the program; OLIS offered two rounds of ARPA-funded mini-scholarships during the pandemic, which was well-received, but the program was discontinued due to lack of funding.

#### C. Field Service Visits

OLIS professional staff will conduct visits to public libraries this summer to discuss challenges, opportunities, and library programming, and to observe LORI and Summer Reading grant activities. Board members interested in attending visits should contact Ms. Mellor.

#### D. RI Department of Education Grants

The Department of Education (RIDE) [LEARN365RI](#) program expands learning from a traditional school year to a 365-day model. Participating community-based organizations can receive funding for capital projects and enhanced learning programs including tutoring. Rogers Free Library (Bristol), Gloucester Manton Free Library, South Kingstown Library, and Cross' Mills Public Library (Charlestown) received grants. Jeremy Chiappetta, Senior Advisor to Governor Dan McKee, discussed the program at the recent Public Library Directors' meeting.

#### E. RI Department of Health, Special Needs Emergency Registry

The Department of Health (DOH) [Special Needs Emergency Registry](#) is available to people who may require special assistance during emergencies, but individuals must self-enroll or be enrolled by their caretaker. The program, which is already promoted by the Talking Books Library, was promoted to public libraries at the Public Library Directors' meeting.

#### F. AskRI Resources

OLIS conducted an AskRI resource usage review and surveyed librarians about the products; survey participation was lower than expected with approximately 70 responses. Some AskRI resources, like Tutor.com, have lower usage than anticipated. Ocean State Libraries (OSL) promotes AskRI resources through its new catalog (Aspen Discovery). In discussing the use of online learning tools, Dr. Lynch reported that RIDE learning resources are also used less frequently. Mr. Coutu reported that some libraries with magazine subscription services, like Hoopla, have seen usage increase substantially due to exposure of resources in Aspen. AskRI survey results will be published online and communicated at the June meeting.

#### G. Resource Sharing

OLIS has facilitated Massachusetts (MA) interstate delivery for LORI libraries for the last 7-8 years; the service was provided by OLIS' delivery vendor and paid for by HELIN, the academic library consortium, as one HELIN member, Wheaton College, is located in MA. OLIS' delivery vendor, Optima Courier, Inc., also provides services to the Massachusetts Library System (MLS); OLIS and MLS partnered to provide the service to LORI and Massachusetts libraries, utilizing the route paid for by HELIN. In April, HELIN eliminated the service to Wheaton, which was not heavily used, to save costs. OLIS will partner with MLS to provide a reduced version

of the service next year; the pilot project will be undertaken as a cost-sharing initiative that is expected to cost OLIS approximately \$8,000 in FY25.

OLIS reviewed use of the OCLC FirstSearch interlibrary loan tool; OLIS' subscription renews in July for \$13,000. Results showed low use and that 575 of 1,300 borrowed interstate items were available in RI. The potential non-renewal communicated at the Public Library Directors' meeting in May was not well-received. OLIS will renew the subscription and has asked the Resource Sharing Working Group to study use of the service in 2025; based on the results of this review, OLIS will render a decision on retaining or discontinuing the service. It was noted that OSL uses a Baker & Taylor cataloging tool ([BTCat](#)) and does not subscribe to an interlibrary loan system for lending OSL materials out of state.

## **V. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **A. Federal & State Legislative Updates (Mr. Coutu)**

Library legislation information and updates is [online](#).

The four biggest library bills have been heard or will have final hearings next week. The Freedom to Read bill (S 2281) was returned to Senate Education indicating it may be brought for full Senate vote before the end of this year's session. Other library bills have been held for further study. RILA lobbyists continue to advocate for an additional \$380,000 for State Aid to Libraries to bring grant-in-aid to the full 25% funding provided for in RIGL 29-6-2. Resolutions supporting 25% GIA funding have been passed by 15 communities.

The RI Library Association (RILA) will issue talking points and contact information to libraries for the librarian protection and eBook bills; the information will be shared with the board.

#### **i. Federal Legislation**

Federal legislation was not discussed.

## **VI. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS**

No board member reports.

## **VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **A. Public Library Minimum Standards**

The committee has met twice. Open hours and combined libraries requirements are under consideration for adjustment. Because certain standards are based on population, adjusting population categories to more accurately reflect RI's population changes will help address some challenges in meeting the current standards. The committee will redefine population categories to create more equitable standards.

The committee has established two subcommittees to work on the standards. The first committee will look at standards relating to policies, governance, and facilities. The second committee will look at standards relating to personnel, collections, and services. The committee will reconvene as a whole to discuss subcommittee work and to identify any overlapping standards. OLIS will assign staff to support each of the sub-committees.

Board committee members include Mr. Bucci, Mr. Coutu, Ms. Drnach, Mr. LaRoux, Ms. Page, Ms. Space, Ms. Steever, Mr. Tran.

## **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Library Facilities Assessment**

OLIS will investigate how other states review library facility improvement costs, especially for repairs, maintenance, and disasters. Basic questions will be added to the annual public library survey to provide feedback to determine how to proceed with a more comprehensive survey. The Board has raised the possibility of a state bond to address maintenance, repair, and climate resilience needs for public libraries.

## **IX. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment.

## **X. FUTURE MEETINGS**

The next LBRI meeting is scheduled for June 17, 2024, from 4:00 – 5:30 p.m., at William Hall Library, 1825 Broad Street, Cranston, RI 02905. Members will be notified of date or venue changes.

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

**Moved By: Mr. Coutu**

**Seconded By: Mr. Findlay**

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.